

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3570

NEW ORLEANS AND NORTHEASTERN RAILROAD COMPANY
SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM

IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR ENTERPRISE, MISS., ON

MAY 26, 1954

SUMMARY

Date: May 26, 1954

Railroad: New Orleans and Northeastern,
Southern Railway System

Location: Enterprise, Miss.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Equipment involved: Track motor-car : Freight train
N-159

Train number: : 62

Engine number: : Diesel-electric
unit 2168

Consist: : 17 cars, caboose

Estimated speeds: Moving slowly in : 30 m. p. h.
backward motion

Operation: Timetable, train orders, and automatic
block-signal system

Track: Single; 0°30' curve; level

Weather: Light rain

Time: 4:20 p. m.

Casualties: 1 killed

Cause: Failure to provide adequate protection
for movement of track motor-car

Recommendation: That the New Orleans and Northeastern
Railroad Company provide adequate
protection for movement of track
motor-cars on its line

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3570

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 6, 1910.

NEW ORLEANS AND NORTHEASTERN RAILROAD COMPANY

SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM

June 17, 1954

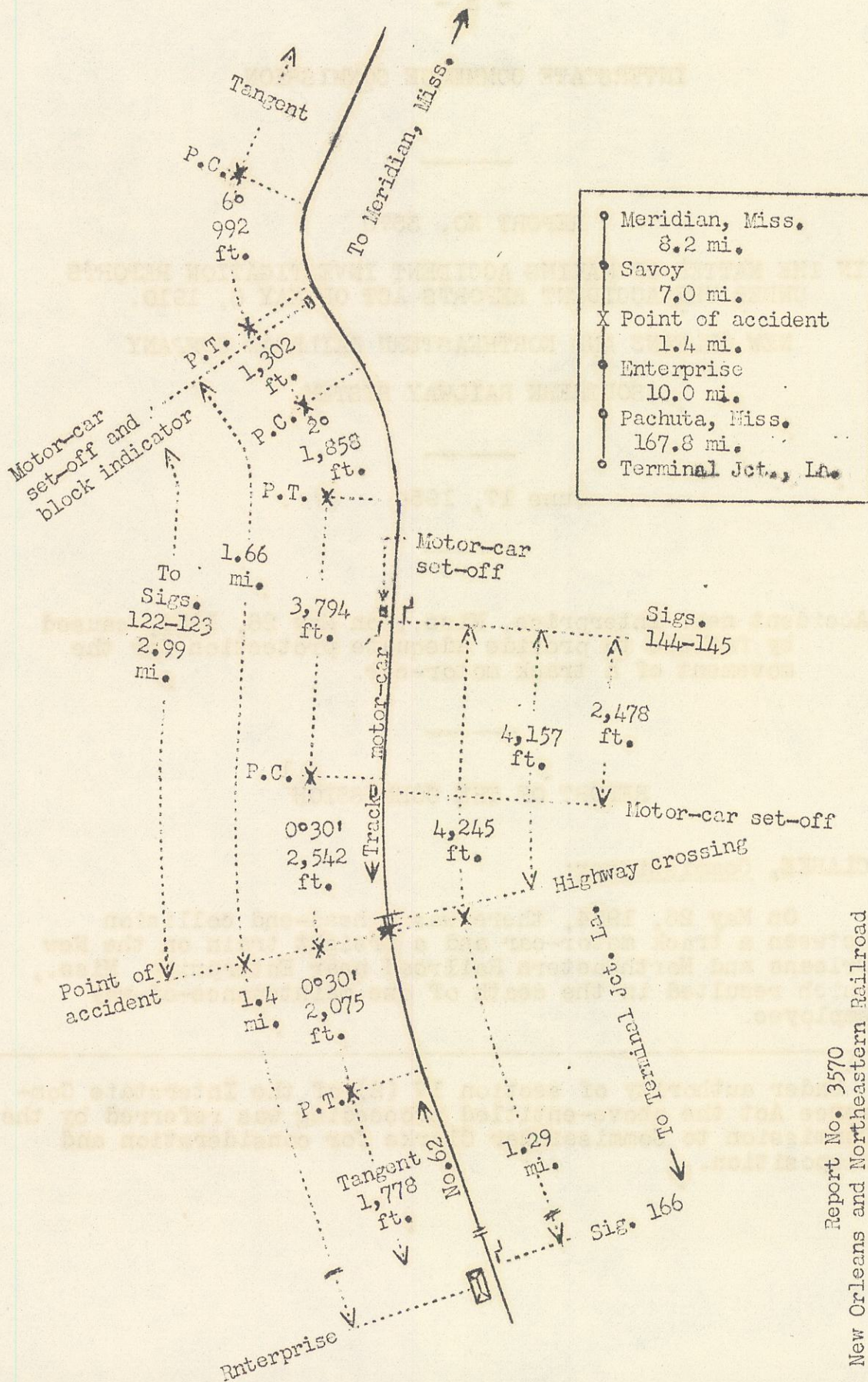
Accident near Enterprise, Miss., on May 26, 1954, caused
by failure to provide adequate protection for the
movement of a track motor-car.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On May 26, 1954, there was a head-end collision between a track motor-car and a freight train on the New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad near Enterprise, Miss., which resulted in the death of one maintenance-of-way employee.

¹ Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Clarke for consideration and disposition.



Report No. 3570
 New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad
 Southern Railway System
 Enterprise, Miss.
 May 26, 1954

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad extending between Meridian, Miss., and Terminal Jct., near New Orleans, La., 194.4 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders, and an automatic block-signal system supplemented by an intermittent inductive automatic train-stop system. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 15.2 miles south of Meridian and 1.4 miles north of the station at Enterprise, Miss. From the north there are, in succession, a 6° curve to the left 992 feet in length, a tangent 1,302 feet, a 2° curve to the right 1,858 feet, a tangent 3,794 feet, and a 0°30' curve to the left 2,542 feet to the point of accident and 2,075 feet southward. From the south there is a tangent 1,778 feet in length followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is practically level.

Automatic signals 123 and 145, governing south-bound movements, are located, respectively, 2.99 miles and 4,245 feet north of the point of accident. Automatic signals 166, 144, and 122, governing north-bound movements, are located, respectively, 1.29 miles south, 4,245 feet north, and 2.99 miles north of the point of accident. These signals are of the upper-quadrant semaphore type. Aspects applicable to this investigation and the corresponding indications and names are as follows:

<u>Signal</u>	<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Indication</u>	<u>Name</u>
122	Vertical	PROCEED	CLEAR SIGNAL
123			
145			
166			
145	Diagonal	PROCEED, PREPARING TO STOP AT NEXT SIGNAL. * * *	APPROACH SIGNAL
145	Horizontal	PROCEED AT RESTRICTED SPEED	RESTRICTED- PROCEED SIGNAL

The control circuits are arranged on the absolute-permissive-block principle. When the block between Enterprise and Pachuta, Miss., 10.0 miles south of Enterprise, is occupied by a north-bound train, signal 145 indicates Approach. After a north-bound train passes signal 166, signal 145 indicates Proceed at Restricted Speed.

A block indicator for the information of maintenance-of-way employees is located 1.66 miles north of the point of accident. This indicator indicates Block Occupied at any time that the indication of signal 145 is more restrictive than Proceed.

This carrier's rules governing the operation of track motor-cars read in part as follows:

8. The user or operator in charge of track cars must take proper measures for safety before occupying main track. He must obtain line-up in writing from telegraph operators, when available, showing location of trains in that territory. * * * Before occupying the main track or engaging in work thereon, all information included in the line-up must be given to other occupants of the car together with advice of the movement to be made and the work to be performed.

Additional line-ups must be secured from time to time as conditions may require, if facilities are available. * * * Line-ups contain information only and do not restrict the movement of trains and must not be considered final, as operating or emergency conditions may necessitate changes at any time.

* * *

9. When necessary to protect movement of track cars, competent employee must immediately be sent out with flagging signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, * * *

11. The operator of track cars in automatic block signal territory must observe the indication of block signals and understand the signal operation on his own and adjoining territory to the extent of knowing position of train when the indication changes. An approach or proceed signal indication means that no train is, at the moment, occupying main track between that particular signal and the point where the approaching train changes the indication of the signal. * * *

The maximum authorized speeds are 25 miles per hour for the track motor-car involved and 60 miles per hour for freight trains.

Description of Accident

About 4 p. m. track motor-car N-159, occupied by a track repairman and a track repairman helper, departed south-bound from a point in the vicinity of signals 122 and 123. It stopped for several minutes a short distance south of these signals, and after another maintenance-of-way employee had boarded the car it again proceeded southward. About 4:20 p. m., after the car had stopped at a point 1.4 miles north of the station at Enterprise and while an attempt was being made to start it in backward motion, it was struck by No. 62.

No. 62, a north-bound third-class freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric unit 2168, 17 cars, and a caboose. This train passed Enterprise at 4:17 p. m., 3 hours 26 minutes late, passed signal 166, which indicated Proceed; and while moving at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour it struck track motor-car N-159.

The track motor-car was moved northward a distance of 1,749 feet to the point at which the front end of No. 62 stopped. It was badly damaged. The north end of the locomotive of No. 62 was slightly damaged.

The track repairman who was on the track motor-car was killed.

The weather was cloudy and there was a light rain at the time of the accident, which occurred about 4:20 p. m.

Track motor-car N-159 is of the one-cylinder, five to eight horsepower, belt-drive type and is equipped with a full width aluminum alloy and safety glass windshield. It weighs 805 pounds and has seating capacity for six persons. It is insulated to prevent the shunting of track circuits.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 11.77 trains.

Discussion

On the day of the accident a track repairman and a track repairman helper were assisting a maintenance-of-way force which was engaged in relaying rails at a point about 4 miles north of Enterprise. These two employees traveled from Enterprise on a track motor-car. The other employees traveled in a motor truck. The track repairman helper said that before

departing from Enterprise, about 7 a. m., the track repairman received a line-up of train movements. After they arrived at the point at which work was to be performed the track motor-car was removed from the track. It was not again used until the work for the day was completed.

The maintenance-of-way force departed for Enterprise about 3:45 p. m. A short time later the track repairman and the helper placed their track motor-car on the track, proceeded to a point in the vicinity of signals 122 and 123 to obtain a tarpaulin, and returned and covered their machines. A member of the maintenance-of-way force boarded the track motor-car in this vicinity. These employees then departed for Enterprise. The helper said that when the south-bound trip was started signals 122 and 123 each indicated Proceed, indicating that there were no trains between Enterprise and Savoy, 8.4 miles north of Enterprise. He asked the track repairman, who was operating the track motor-car, whether he had received any information as to the location of No. 62. The track repairman replied that he had not. According to the statements of the surviving occupants of the track motor-car, when the car passed the block indicator located 1.66 miles north of the point at which the accident occurred the occupants observed that the indicator indicated Block Occupied. The helper warned the track repairman that a train was approaching and that the track motor-car should be removed from the track. The track repairman replied that they would proceed around the curve to a point from which they could obtain a view of signal 145. When this signal became visible to the occupants of the track motor-car, they observed that the signal indicated Approach. The track repairman then asked the helper at what point a north-bound train would actuate the signal. The helper told him that the approach aspect would be displayed after a north-bound train passed Pachuta, but since they did not know how long this aspect had been displayed he thought the track motor-car should be removed from the track at a motor-car set-off located near the signal. The track repairman said that they would proceed to a rail-highway grade crossing located 4,157 feet beyond the signal and would continue to watch the signal in the meantime. They passed a motor-car set-off located 2,478 feet south of the signal and soon afterward, because of curvature of the track, they could no longer see the signal. It continued to indicate Approach when they last saw it. The track motor-car approached the rail-highway grade crossing at a speed of between 20 and 25 miles per hour and passed the crossing without a reduction in speed. Immediately afterward the occupants observed the headlight of No. 62.

The track repairman stopped the car and instructed the member of the maintenance-of-way force to provide flag protection. He then remained on the car and attempted to start it in backward motion while the helper pushed it northward. The helper thought he had moved the car about 200 feet when it was struck by the train. The collision occurred 88 feet south of the crossing. The helper said the car could have been removed from the track at the point at which it first stopped, and he thought that if they had removed the car from the track instead of moving it northward they could have removed it before it was struck by No. 62.

As No. 62 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 45 miles per hour. The enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment of the locomotive. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The locomotive, a road-switcher type, was moving in backward motion and was being operated by the fireman, a qualified engineer. The headlight at the north end of the locomotive was lighted brightly. The brakes of the train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. When the front of the train reached a point about 2,000 feet south of the point of accident the engineer and the front brakeman saw the track motor-car ahead. At this time their view of the track motor-car was somewhat obstructed by a pole line which parallels the track on the east, and they could not tell whether the car was occupying the main track. They called a warning to the fireman, and he closed the throttle and made a service application of the brakes. Several seconds later the engineer and the front brakeman saw that the track motor-car was occupying the main track and that a person a short distance south of the car was giving stop signals with a red flag. They immediately called a warning, and the fireman made an emergency application of the brakes and sounded a warning signal on the pneumatic horn. The fireman said he thought the speed had been reduced to about 30 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

The rules of this carrier provide that before occupying the main track the operator of a track motor-car must, when practicable, obtain a line-up showing the locations of trains in that territory. The rules also provide that line-ups are to be considered as information only and do not restrict the movement of trains. In the instant case, before starting the south-bound trip the operator of the track motor-car told the helper that he did not know the location of No. 62. However, after observing the indications of the block indicator and of signal 145, he was aware that either No. 62 or another north-bound train was approaching. From the manner in which he operated the track motor-car it appears that he thought there would be sufficient time to clear the track after the train

became visible to him and that after he saw the train he underestimated the speed at which it was moving. There is no requirement that track motor-cars clear the times of trains or that they be clear of the main track before trains are operated. This method of operation, which places on the operators of track motor-cars the responsibility of computing the running times of trains in order to avoid collisions, does not provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars.

Since January 1, 1944, the Commission has investigated 48 collisions, including the present case, which were caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars. These accidents resulted in the death of 84 persons and the injury of 144 persons. In the reports covering the investigations of these accidents, the Commission repeatedly has recommended that the carriers take measures to provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars on their lines.

Cause

This accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of a track motor-car.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad Company provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars on its line.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventeenth day of June, 1954.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

GEORGE W. LAIRD,

Secretary.